

*Seaman (L. L.)*  
*With the compliments of Dr. Grunau*

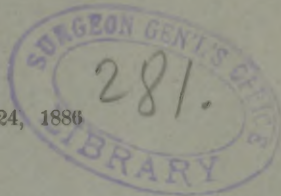
THE  
SOCIAL WASTE OF A GREAT CITY

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE  
AT ITS  
ANNUAL MEETING IN BUFFALO, AUGUST 20, 1886

BY  
LOUIS L. SEAMAN, M.D., LL.B.

LATE CHIEF OF STAFF CHARITY, MATERNITY, PENITENTIARY, EPILEPTIC, AND PARALYTIC  
HOSPITALS, B. I.; MEMBER OF THE A. A. A. S.; THE NEW YORK COUNTY MEDICAL  
SOCIETY; FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, ETC.

Reprint from SCIENCE, September 24, 1886



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# EXTRACTS FROM THE PRESS.

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## CITY CHARITIES AND CORRECTION.

*(Editorial from The New York Tribune, August 21, 1886.)*

DR. L. L. SEAMAN, for many years Chief of Staff at Charity Hospital, Blackwell's Island, yesterday read a paper before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at Buffalo, which is of special interest to New Yorkers. Copious extracts from this essay are given elsewhere in this issue. In vivid language Dr. Seaman describes the social waste of this metropolis, and reviews the operations of the great municipal department which takes charge both of criminals and of those whose only offence is their poverty. His long and thorough experience in the department enables him to speak with authority, and he does not hesitate to speak out boldly in condemnation of the evils and abuses which have grown up in this branch of the city government, and which seriously impair its efficiency. The chief source of trouble is that partisan politics has been allowed to affect a large part of the service, although there is no department from which ward "workers" and faction parasites should be more rigorously excluded.

Some of the institutions are undoubtedly in excellent hands. Dr. Macdonald, for instance, owes his high position to unquestioned merit and exceptional ability, and not to political considerations of any sort. But it is evident to all who have scrutinized the operations of the Department of Charities and Correction that some of the Commissioners are politicians first and public servants afterward, and that to a lamentable degree the hospitals, asylums, and prisons are looked to as a means of paying off obligations for services in election districts, rather than as institutions demanding intelligent and conscientious supervision, and requiring in every official and attendant the possession of qualities which can never be useful in the conciliation of the floating vote of the dram-shops or in the working out of the tricks and schemes of the subways of ward politics.

## THE "UNDER-WORLD" OF A GREAT CITY.

*(Editorial from The Mail and Express, August 21, 1886.)*

AMONG the papers read at the present session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at Buffalo, is one by Dr. L. L. Seaman, on "The Social Waste of a Great City," that deserves the thoughtful attention of all New Yorkers. Dr. Seaman was for many years Chief of Staff at Charity Hospital, on Blackwell's Island, and knows what he is talking about. His statements are, or ought to be, startling; but they are true as Gospel.

After speaking of the necessity for waste that exists in every organism—waste that up to a certain point is the sign of a healthful growth, but beyond that is a sign of decay and of ultimate disintegration—he instances the city's institutions of charities and correction as measures of the city's waste, and calls attention to the enormous proportions of this outcast and useless element in social life. It has, he says, seized upon and subsidized the fairest string of islands that graces a metropolis the world over. Where there might have been, under a shrewder, better providence, parks, groves, museums, art-galleries, zoological gardens, wholesome games, exhilarants for honest industry and useful thrift, stretching at little intervals from Governor's to Hart's Island, full eighteen miles, the Nemesis of penalty and retribution has planted its growing colonies of social waste—of broken, degraded, repulsive, dangerous human detritus; and this baleful colonization has pushed its way along those beautiful eastern waters, keeping step with the advancing city, until its entire line of eastern frontage, far up into Westchester County, is sentinelled by those menacing excrescences of a moribund civilization. The municipality is a body, and it requires no labored or exhaustive differential diagnosis to determine that a body thus smitten with boils, and blains, with tangled and distempered wits, so scorched with fevers of drunkenness and debauchery, so threatened with poison in the very life-blood, is at best in a desperate condition.

The millions spent in maintaining these institutions—prisons, jails, reformatories, almshouses, hospitals—are so much waste money; money that goes for the mere cleaning out of the social cesspools, and for keeping the social body from being infected and diseased through and through. They must be maintained, for the sake of the public



welfare, but what a tremendous waste of treasure, of life, of energy, is involved in merely getting rid of the city's social garbage !

The primary cause of all this waste, the cause without whose operation these "institutions" of waste would, in a decade, shrink and shrivel wellnigh out of sight, is strong drink. "Drink and debauchery," says Dr. Seaman, "are inseparable, and poverty and crime and pestilence are their progeny." "If drink and lust furnish three-quarters of the criminals, they are more lavish yet with the almshouses, and they have a busy hand in filling the wards of the hospitals."

While the dram-shops are the breeders of the vice and crime that render such institutions a necessity, they are, also, says this fearless and incisive writer, the spawning-ground of the politicians who control the management of the city's departments. The garbage and the contractor who takes it away and takes care of it have a common origin, and it is to the interest of the contractor that the supply of garbage shall not fall short. "Under such conditions," says Dr. Seaman, "what else could happen than has steadily happened—perpetual jostlings, abuse of discipline, tampering with the courts, muddling of justice, and an impassable chasm which separates between a time-serving officialism and the scientific and professional superintendencies; a deadlock which discourages, if it does not paralyze, the *esprit de corps* of medical administrations; which withholds the incentive for legitimate emulation, and reduces the men who devote, and not infrequently surrender, their lives to the standing of tide-waiters under the bidding of an irresponsible board, which is itself nothing better than an accident in political evolution. The "machine" is supreme. And the Commissioners rattle their own handcuffs of partisan servitude while reducing this army of employees and subordinates to the lock-step of partisan bondage. The same process is going on in the kindred departments of municipal administration, as the Department of Public Works, the Fire Department, and the Board of Education. Pickings and stealings, the building up of snug fortunes, the judicious nursing of thrifty opportunities, are insignificant elements if they really lie in the subject. The crowning injustice, the superlative cruelty, lies in the fact that this gravest trust from the people is become at once the toy and makeshift of professional politicians."

This is a dark picture, but who will dare to say that the colors are too black ?

## SOCIAL WASTE.

(Editorial from *The New York Tribune*, August 27, 1886.)

THE paper read by Dr. L. L. Seaman before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, on "The Social Waste of a Great City," full extracts from which appeared in Saturday's *Tribune*, is very suggestive. The author's long personal experience as Chief of Staff at the Blackwell's Island Hospital gives special weight to his observations, and seldom have the defects of municipal administration and the social system been laid bare with a keener scalpel. The doctor has laid his hand on the spring of manifold abuses. It is unfortunately true that the appetite for drink and the agencies which minister to that appetite combine to produce and perpetuate evils which the clear-sighted observer may well fear are undermining modern civilization. The drink evil by itself is bad enough, but when the element which prospers by ministering to and fostering it comes to control the machinery which deals with the results of debauchery, the efforts of philanthropy and science to diminish the alarming growth of physical and moral disease are made terribly difficult and hopeless.

"Drink and debauchery," says Dr. Seaman, "are inseparable, and poverty and crime and pestilence are their progeny. . . . Eliminate or shorten within hygienic limits the traffic in strong drink, and these 'institutions' of waste would, in a decade, shrivel and shrink wellnigh out of sight." But what expectation of better conditions can be entertained so long as the intelligent public, the real arbiters of the commonwealth's destinies, regard with inert complacency or passive indifference the active operation of processes which are constantly feeding the already great army of the incompetent, the criminal and the incurable, and poisoning society at its base by dooming to hopeless failure tens of thousands whose degradation renders them at once the enemies and the pensioners of the community? On the one hand stand the manufactories of misery, disease, and crime, always active, always turning out new subjects for the penitentiary, the hospital, and the almshouse. On the other hand are the institutions which have been made necessary by the activities of these laboratories of evil, and the final supervision of which is in the hands of men virtually chosen by the makers of the drunkards, the ruffians, and the wrecks.



This is travelling in a vicious circle, as Dr. Seaman observes, and while the existing conditions are tolerated by society it is useless to think of amendment. So obtuse, however, do men become by habituation to abuses that, instead of deriving from the contemplation of our vast system of Charities and Correction the rational inference that the necessity for such machinery is in itself an impeachment of the social and political systems, the majority ignore the causes altogether, and "point with pride" to the excellence and completeness of the effects. Would the possession of the biggest inebriate asylum in the country be a matter for congratulation to any city? Is an enormous machinery for handling society's failures better evidence of advancing civilization? The country has fought through one war to abolish the more obvious kind of human slavery. If, indeed, the moral sense of man is becoming keener and more sensitive, the time cannot be distant when the American conscience will rise in revolt against the agencies which put the very souls of thousands under a servitude compared to which African slavery was a blessing, and which debauch private life and government, sinking the individual and the body politic in one common abasement.

## THE SOCIAL WASTE OF A GREAT CITY.

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IN the human body there is a legitimate waste of tissue and substance, structurally indispensable to its best development; and there is waste which depletes vitality, and is beyond the power of science to make good, while it is the herald of approaching dissolution. A great city is a corporation, a body politic. This complex organization, too, has a legitimate waste as a perpetual evidence of its thrifty increase; and at the same time it suffers waste which is dead loss of social capital and resource, while it points the way to ultimate disintegrations. Men and cities thrive, waste, and perish on parallel and strictly analogous lines. During a professional service of ten years among the charitable institutions under the control of the Board of Commissioners of Charities and Correction, and also under the Commissioners of Emigration, this fundamental maxim of social science has gathered significance with the growth of experience. The people have become so accustomed to this downward drift—this unresting current of wretchedness, profligacy, and crime—possibly so hoodwinked by the imposing array of architectural groups, and the glamour of official reports bristling with statistics, that they miss the ghastliness of the situation, and think about it, if at all, in a vague and unconcerned way. But to the earnest observer ghosts constantly arise which will not down. There is much ado in commercial circles about the *débris* and material waste of the streets and houses, and its best disposition, the people knowing full well that pestilence and epidemics bear with no trifling or superficial expedients. Besides, the harbor and its approaches must be neither choked nor befouled. The fear of disease, the dread of death, the timidity and greed of capital keep sharp and suspicious watch, and in this direction the public welfare is measurably safe.

But outside a group of philanthropists and professional people, whose lives are spent in the service of this great and growing under-world of poverty breeding desperation, and vice breeding both poverty and crime, few care or think about it, or undertake to penetrate its dreadful secrets; while the casual shoaling of the harbor-

channels, the grounding of an ocean-going steamer, the least chill or check of financial thrift, a trace of typhoid or small-pox, the transportation of dressed beef or cattle, the tug and chicanery of rival monopolies, the disgusting encounters of professional pugilists, stir and thrill the pulses of the metropolis to their liveliest beat.

All the while this menacing under-world, with a biting irony, asserts itself, and compels recognition as imperatively as does the cancer as it eats its way to the vitals. It seizes upon and subsidizes the fairest string of islands that grace a metropolis the world over. Where there might have been, under a shrewder, better providence, parks, groves, museums, art-galleries, zoological gardens, wholesome games, exhilarants for honest industry and useful thrift, stretching at little intervals from Governor's to Hart's Island, full eighteen miles, the Nemesis of penalty and retribution has planted her growing colonies of social waste—of broken, degraded, repulsive, dangerous human detritus; and this baleful colonization has pushed its way along those beautiful eastern waters, keeping step with the advancing city, until its entire line of eastern frontage, far up into Westchester County, is sentinelled by these menacing excrescences of a moribund civilization. The municipality is a body; and it requires no labored or exhaustive differential diagnosis to determine that a body thus smitten with boils and blains, with tangled and distempered wits, so scorched with fevers of drunkenness and debauchery, so threatened with poison in the very life-blood, is at best in a desperate condition.

So much for these "institutions of charities and correction." In abundant outlay and thorough and intelligent organization, and in general scientific oversight, they stand, after their class, unrivalled, at home or abroad. Indeed, we have to make much of them; so that when distinguished visitors, dignitaries, or scientists come upon us for municipal hospitalities, who does not forecast the inevitable festive picnic excursion through and among these same "institutions," with its steamer decked in bunting, its junketings, its congratulatory speeches, as the Commissioners uncover our plague-spots and social ulcers, our paupers and desperadoes, our crazed and our foundlings, for the edification of the day? Why not extend the route on future occasions, and so complete the panorama? This would take in the Morgue and Potter's Field, and their upland springs and feeders; the bagnios, with their more than fifteen thousand profligate women; the ten thousand dram-shops; the underground hells and disreputable concert dance-halls, which day and night, year in and year out, keep up



the infernal work of peopling these islands. There would be something like logic and thoroughness in such an exposition.

The extent and magnitude of this social waste no man knows, and no man can know. There are outlying hidden realms of developing, maturing mischief and evil yet in the egg, scattered, unsuspected items of blemish and loss, which no report ever tabulates; and we are thrown back upon the depressing consciousness that the larger part of this under-world, like the freighted steamer or the floating iceberg, lies well out of sight.

Let us take a rapid account of stock, and, in part at least, see where we stand. First, these islands: Blackwell's, nearly two miles long, flushed by two swift channels of the river it divides, full ninety acres in extent, studded from end to end with the epileptic and paralytic, maternity and charity hospitals, the New York penitentiary sprawling athwart well nigh from shore to shore, the almshouse, the workhouse, and the women's lunatic asylum, and its growing population of more than seven thousand. Then Ward's Island, lying in a nearly rectangular area of two hundred and sixty acres, at the junction of the Harlem and East Rivers at Hell Gate; here are the lunatic asylum for males and the homœopathic hospital, together having about three thousand inmates. Immediately north, and separated by Little Hell Gate, some two hundred feet wide, is Randall's Island, a shield-shaped area of a hundred and sixty acres, and, with Ward's, lying close to the city; here are the infants' and Randall's Island hospitals, an asylum for idiots, a branch of the penitentiary, an insane asylum for the young, and the house of refuge. Advancing a mile, we find Riker's Island, for the exclusive use of correctional institutions, a fair domain of sixty acres. And yet farther up the Sound, some seventeen miles from the city, the advanced post of this ever-growing colonization, with its area of some fifty acres, its hospital for incurables, and branch workhouse and lunatic asylum (nearly thirty-five hundred inmates), and—the ghastly halting-place of all this interminable procession—Potter's Field, with its myriads of friendless, dishonored dead, we reach and stop at Hart's Island.

Here are more than six hundred acres of the fairest islands, lying all the way close to the city frontage, now become a rank witness of its loss and shame. Who will venture an estimate of the present and prospective value of this perverted, sequestered real estate, and the outlay represented in its multiplied structures? Add to these assets of the Board of Commissioners of Charities and Correction a fleet of

transports, for the service of more than sixteen thousand colonists; Bellevue Hospital, the various buildings in the service of the department, the hospital service at police stations, ambulances, equipments, prison vans; then the police stations and properties, the jails and prisons, and a just allotment of court and justice chambers, where the selections are made and the harvest of tares gathered—this is but a fraction of cost and loss to the people—a shameful investment, which, as will shortly appear, feeds the sources and energies that exact it.

We must not lose sight of the millions spent in the erection and support of foundling-asylums, reformatories of various sorts and uses, dispensaries, children's aid societies, infirmaries, and hospitals founded and sustained by individual and private beneficence—all part of the great total exactions wrung from the public thrift, and turned aside from legitimate uses and benefits to the nourishment and maintenance of this terrible under-world.

It is equally impossible to measure the yearly outlay in this account with social waste. The Board of Commissioners alone send in estimates for their own disbursements for 1886 amounting to \$1,947,607.50. According to the City Comptroller's report for 1883, the appropriations for asylums, reformatories, and charitable institutions, presumably outside such as are committed to the care of the Commissioners of Charities and Correction, was \$1,029,953.53, and this had in 1885 grown to \$1,108,957.51. This total ratio of growth in the increasing cost of social waste must not be lost sight of, for the colonies grow by a visibly advancing ratio; so does the cost in all the municipal departments having special care of them; while the conservative, reparative institutions lag behind the constantly increasing development of the city. The Board of Education, for example, for ten years past, scarcely breaks the even tenor of an annual appropriation, which fell to \$3,400,000 in 1879, and rose to \$3,769,086 in 1874, and only reached \$3,750,000 in 1883. These data are drawn from the Comptroller's report of 1883. Later accounts might throw light upon this apparent decline in the educational enterprise of the city. In this hurried glance at the schedule of assets, we are not to lose sight of the police department—a standing army, keeping guard night and day, trained, officered, armed, and paid—the picked brawn and muscle of the town, banded together for the public protection. Add to these another army of keepers, attendants, nurses, deputies, resident bodies of medical men and their student assistants, and we begin to catch an outline of the magnitude and proportions of outlay in money, values, time, and men, subtracted from the normal

uses and functions of thrift-production both in social and civil life, both of which are thus far impoverished and debilitated because of this shrinkage and loss in vitality. Here the sociologist is baffled; for no statistical tabulation, however minute and exact, adequately or even approximately represents the substance of the problem.

I do not review the physical elements of this problem to arraign the authorities, or to challenge the costliness of the attempt to meet and discharge an absolute duty; it is simply the exaction of Nemesis—the price of ignorance, unthrift, sensuality, and crime, which the people must pay in one shape or another. The questions left for consideration are the sources of social waste, and the practical hinderances in the way of their municipal relief and correction.

The sources mostly lie far back out of sight, and in unexpected places. Among these is the pressure of labor, especially women's labor; and the tens of thousands of young girls literally imprisoned over-hours at the sewing-machine, behind the counters of stifling shops, in cigar-factories, and at tenement-house tobacco-work, in factories innumerable, where the fever of competition feeds on the blood and brain of girls and children, with the inevitable poisoned air, insufficient nutrition, and exhaustive toil, constitute one of the most perilous sources of supply for the vicious and criminal classes. Hunger, desperation, unendurable tension of nerve and muscle, are all the time goading thousands toward mercenary profligacy. These conditions are not only unfriendly to virtue and chastity; they create and intensify those critical conditions that breed shame and dishonor. Virtuous, easy-going ladies and gentlemen must get their haberdashery at bargain prices, even at the yearly immolation of hecatombs of girl and women workers, who are literally starved into the ranks of the falling and fallen. Among all the thousands who drift into the island population there are found few exceptions to this experience. Poverty, lust, and drink—these three—and their progeny—profligacy and crime—cover nine-tenths of the social and moral history of these coming and going islanders. The disreputable dance-halls and concert dives and bagnios, and vile places of resort of one kind and another, all connect with this range of hopeless, suffering world of women-workers.

When capital and commerce grow humane, and become as considerate of human hearts and lives as they are of machinery, vehicles, horses, and other useful appliances of industry and honest increase, then, and not sooner, will this diabolic waste of womanhood be checked and stayed.



Note again the viperous nests of friendless and orphaned boys and lads who herd in out-of-the-way covers in or about the city, without homes, teaching, or training—the progeny of criminals, or paupers, or drunkards—getting keenness and animal ferocity out of their hardships, and a training, of its kind, for the full-grown thief, burglar, and murderer.

“Mr. Delamater, of the New York Police Department, after careful estimate, states ‘that seventy-five per cent. of our convicts are city born and bred,’ and adds, ‘that of the 2,576 inmates of the three State prisons of New York, on September 30, 1884, 1,645, or 63.8 per cent., were from Kings and New York counties.’”

“The secretary of the National Prison Association write smore conjecturally, but more emphatically: ‘I looked over . . . my list of cases, which I have investigated personally, and find that more than four-fifths of the wrong-doers were either born in cities or had become residents of cities when very young. . . . If you had asked “as between large towns and city, and country-bred children,” I should have been obliged to add almost the other fifth.’” \*

“The celebrated French reformatory, Mettray, has since its foundation admitted 3,588 youthful inmates: 707 of these were the children of convicts; 534 ‘natural’ children; 221 foundlings; 504 children of a second marriage; 308 those whose parents live in concubinage; and 1,542 children without either father or mother” (*Une visite à Mettray*, Paris, 1868).

“According to Dr. Bittinger (‘Transactions of the National Congress,’ p. 279), of the 7,963 inmates of the reformatories of the United States in 1870, fifty-five per cent. were orphans or half-orphans.”

M. de Marsaugy, a clever French author, in writing of the causes of juvenile crime in France, says that “a fifth of those who have been the objects of judicial pursuit are composed of orphans, the half have no father, a quarter no mother, and, as for those who have a family, nearly all are dragged by it into evil” (*Moralisation de l'enfance coupable*, p. 13).

The precocity of the criminal classes is notorious and portentous. It sets back year by year, until the courts have long since passed the teens, and children under twelve are seen in the prisoner's dock, with growing frequency, for serious misdemeanors and crimes. The police confess the practical difficulty, not so much of exterminating as of

\* Charles D. Kellogg, in a paper read before the American Social Science Association, 1885.

repressing these nests of juvenile outcasts, who prove more formidable even than bands of adult outlaws. Something is done toward depleting this threatening element, under the action of the Children's Aid Society and the various half-penal reformatories. But these latter too often send out graduates, ripe in the vilest lore of evil, contracted while under the costly care and training of the State.

Superintendent Kellogg, of the Charity Organization Society, in the address already quoted, further states that :

" In 1883 every twelfth commitment by the courts of New York was either of a girl under twenty, or of a boy under fourteen years of age : of the former there were 2,054, and of the latter, 2,118, a total of 4,172. At the same time there were thousands of children drawn from the poor, permanently lodged in the public correctional institutions and the fifteen or twenty reformatories of the city. Those youth who have fallen into police custody are probably lost for any good purpose to the community ; and that loss, it will be seen, is greater pecuniarily and numerically than that caused by preventable death. As a social disease, their presence in the community is injurious beyond computation, since an infiltration goes on from them through gradually enlarging areas of society. Nor is their depravity like the calamity that comes with a blow, and then all is over. Having reached adolescence, they go on from year to year, dependent, predatory, contaminating."

We have taken too superficial an estimate of the tramp population in its relation to social waste and disorder.

The following statistics were taken from the Annual Report of the Board of Police Justices of the City of New York for 1884 : " 6,275 persons were arrested, or appeared in the police courts of New York City, in 1884, against whom a charge of vagrancy was preferred ; and of this number 5,892 were convicted upon competent testimony or upon their own confession."

*Comparison with former Years.*

YEAR.	NUMBER ARRAIGNED.			NUMBER CONVICTED.		
	Males.	Females.	Total.	Males.	Females.	Total.
1874	1,751	1,388	3,139	1,572	1,293	2,865
1883	3,012	2,566	5,578	2,787	2,434	5,171
1884	3,638	2,637	6,275	3,372	2,520	5,892

“The number of persons arrested upon the charge of disorderly conduct in 1884 was 28,696. Of these, there were convicted and fined, or held to bail for good behavior, 20,311.”

*Comparison with former Years.*

YEAR.	NUMBER ARRAIGNED.			NUMBER CONVICTED.		
	Males.	Females.	Total.	Males.	Females.	Total.
1874	13,568	7,125	20,693	7,058	4,699	11,757
1883	16,272	7,611	23,883	10,517	6,196	16,713
1884	19,944	8,752	28,696	13,141	7,170	20,311

“The registration bureau of The Charity Organization Society of New York City records a list of 71,332 different families, or a total population of 285,000 individuals, involved in mendicancy or dependence” (*Report of Charity Organization Society, 1886*).

This waste shows a deadly apathy, a dying-out of purpose, a fatal estrangement from home, family, and society, for which there has, as yet, been found neither remedy nor cure. This tramp class grows, and grows dangerous and desperate, too, and is chargeable with an increasing number of outrages, assaults, and crimes against both property and person. The island, the almshouse, and workhouses do not reach or touch their cases, for they gather physical endurance and resources from fresh campaignings across country, until rounded up again by winter weather in the great cities. Even the dead weight of this class, like sheer moral inertia, rests like an incubus upon the community; a species of leprosy, in short, that spreads while it kills, surely if slowly. This discouraged, cowed, broken-down class is likely to increase under a civilization which develops millionnaires and monopolies out of the feebleness and misfortunes of the masses. Strange illustrations of this soulless work of disintegration may be found any and every day in hospital, penitentiary, almshouse, insane asylum, or morgue.

But well-to-do labor, legitimate, hopeful industry, insensibly contribute their quota in the multitudes, who, too heavily handicapped in the struggles, in the irresistible spirit of emulation and haste for riches that stimulates and fires on all sides, succumb to some form of mania or insanity. The inmates of these insane asylums are largely



over-worked, over-anxious lives, thrown out of gearing often by a very slight obstruction—lives too far collapsed to resist an appetite or passion which might hardly ruffle the equipoise of a robust nature.

The heredity of evil is an element of incalculable significance, the fearful rolling-up or rolling-down from generation to generation, through all the ages, of the weakness, vice, and moral darkness of the past. The increase is more than compounded. It spreads and penetrates in every direction without spending or diluting its death-dealing vigor. Evil is gregarious, it is prolific. It grows into a society of its own, well named the half or under world. It stamps its offspring indelibly. It not only inbreeds to deadlier purpose ; it grows by what it captures, defiles, and anneals in some vital, hopeless way to itself. No man or woman who is "sent up" to these colonies ever returns to the city scot-free. There is a lien, visible or hidden, upon his or her present or future, which too often proves stronger than the best purposes and fairest opportunities of social rehabilitation. The under world, with the police and detective forces practically in its interest, holds in rigorous bondage every unfortunate or miscreant who has once "served time." There is often tragic interest in the struggles of these insnared wretches to break away from the meshes spun about them. But the maelstrom has no bowels of mercy ; and the would-be fugitives are flung back again and again into the devouring whirlpool of crime and poverty, until the end is reached on the dissecting-table or in Potter's field. Men who insist on breaking with this tyrannous fellowship are often driven to seek refuge among the various institutions on the islands, in menial or half-menial service, as helpers, messengers, or orderlies, under the beggarly wages of the department, as a better alternative than a life at large, constantly imperilled by the threats and allurements of evil association.

A serious percentage of this waste is thrown at our doors by emigration. "Less than forty-eight per cent. of the criminals convicted in the police courts of the city of New York in 1884 were native born. Of the total number, 51,845, the United States contributed 24,511 ; Ireland, 16,349 ; Germany, 5,273 ; England, 1,801 ; Italy, 1,707 ; other countries, 2,205" (*Annual Report of Board of Police Justices, New York, 1884*). Thus, while it is not properly our own, we become charged with its care and cost. Many of the old abuses have given way before a more intelligent and discriminating legislation ; and the penitentiaries, workhouses, and almshouses of Europe no longer engage in the systematic and wholesale deportation of their paupers

and criminals to our shores. But in the large volume of a growing and desirable immigration, the casualties and exhaustion of ocean travel, epidemics, and misfortune leave many stranded and helpless in this great city.

But the crowning, almost inclusive, source of public injury is unquestionably strong drink and drunkenness. Yet the people pocket a hush or conscience money of half a million or so yearly, and then legalize or explicitly connive at the establishment of more than ten thousand drinking-places in the city. The moralist and social reformer have for generations shouted in our ears and spread before our eyes the terrible statistics of this most inhumane and inhuman traffic. Judges from the bench take up and repeat the refrain. Science and philanthropy, hand in hand, demonstrate, expostulate, and threaten; yet the bribe-taking goes on, and the city, for its yearly dole of half a million, lets loose this army of incendiaries, more dreadful than conflagrations, more deadly than pestilence, more destructive than the field of battle. It is no metaphor to attribute this moribund, hopeless, repulsive, excrescence population to the parentage of strong drink, for drink and debauchery are inseparable, and poverty and crime and pestilence are their progeny. If drink and lust furnish three-fourths of the criminals, they are more lavish yet with the almshouse, and they have a busy hand in filling the wards of the hospitals. Eliminate or shorten within hygienic limits the traffic in strong drink, and these institutions of waste would in a decade shrivel and shrink wellnigh out of sight.

What can the moralist or scientist do by way of resuscitation? Very little at best. The flotsam and jetsam are mere shreds and fragments of wasted lives. Such a ministry must begin at the sources—is necessarily prophylactic, nutritive, educational. On these islands there are no flexible twigs, only guarded, blasted, blighted trunks, insensible to moral or social influences.

The physician, priest, and turnkey share a common outlook of nearly baffled hopelessness; and almost the sole blossom—the sole fair and precious jewel to be found in this world of refuse and desolation—is the culture of a stronger, surer medical science, and the training and education of ministrants for the sick-room and hospital-wards. And the sole ground of hope and amelioration lies in the rigid enforcement of a more practical civil service, and in the vigilant, gratuitous, and inexpensive supervision of the State Board of Charities, whose stated and fearless probings into dark, unsuspected corners, whose

scientific insight and humane devotion to their unwelcome mission, have instituted or energized every project or reform for betterment thus far attempted in our municipal institutions.

The hindrances in the work, and the conditions unfavorable and even hostile to its best administration, lie in full sight of every thinking observer.

First, we note the illogical and most unrighteous affiliation between crime and poverty. "Charities" and "correction," forsooth; some diabolic Malaprop surely linked these terms in unequal fellowship. What have criminals to do with the sick and poor, and why should conditions morally more widely separated than the poles be literally handcuffed in mutual ignominy? The relation between crime and poverty is no more essential than between crime and wealth. It is not for a so-called modern civilization to smirch and befoul a condition in life in itself honorable, reputable, and of a certain dignity, by involuntary association with the tramp, harlot, thief, and assassin. There is a charity called for at the hands of the municipality which suffers unendurable shame and affront under this duplex administration of charity and correction. There is much pitiable, unfortunate, blameless poverty finding shelter in the hospitals and at the almshouse. Why should it be thrust into intolerable contrast with shameful, dissolute pauperdom? Keep the absurd term "pauper," if it must be, to mark the latter herd; but leave "poverty" and "the poor" to the patient, long-enduring, suffering, and often heroic victims of failures, that fall under the wheels of success or monopoly. To such, a true life pays involuntary courtesy as to the maimed, unshapely, helpless victims of the battlefield. Because of this graceless confusion and breach of duty, much that even municipal charities might undertake and accomplish is now hopelessly out of reach.

The conclusion is irresistible that a fatality lurks in the very organization of the Board of Management. Here is the sphere where there is a demand for the soundest philanthropist, the matured student in sociology, together with the bravest and wisest medical service. Such alone are competent to look after and administer this settlement of social waste. There is natural congruity in this postulate. Financiers, we say, for banking, trust funds, and the public treasury; metallurgists and chemists and engineers, for mining; learning, logic, and eloquence, for the forum; that is, the specialist full ripe for his specialty. But how is it with this board who have so long been in place? Here and there the tonic presence of a strong personality has



been felt ; but who is so weak or stupid as to identify the board, under its present constitution, with these necessary interests in the life of the community ?

And here we are forcibly confronted with a monstrous anomaly, and it is the constant peril of this whole field of municipal administration. The Board of Commissioners of Charities and Correction, together with its entire system from greatest to least, from centre to outpost, is in abject slavery to municipal politics, is a recognized, hopeless appendage of the "machine." It does not spring frankly and wisely from the popular suffrage. It has no freedom, no will, no autonomy. On the contrary, it is honeycombed with bureaucracy and officialism ; and the powers that move and manipulate every member of this great constituency are as far removed above their heads as the chess-player above the pieces he manipulates. This is the inherent vice of a system which relegates the administration of the under-world of social waste to the machine and its politicians ; for at the outset a vicious circle is established. The dram-shops are the spawning-grounds of municipal politics and politicians. Yet these same dram-shops are chiefly responsible for the existence and growth of the very institutions over whose fortunes the politicians, their other progeny, have come to preside. What else could happen than has steadily happened—perpetual jostlings, abuse of discipline, tampering with the courts, muddling of justice, and an impassable chasm which separates between a time-serving officialism and the scientific and professional superintendencies—a dead-lock which discourages, if it does not paralyze, the *esprit de corps* of medical administration ; which withholds the incentive for legitimate emulation, and reduces the men who devote, and not infrequently surrender, their lives, to the standing of tide-waiters under the bidding of an irresponsible board, which is itself nothing better than an accident in political evolution ? The machine is supreme ; and the Commissioners rattle their own handcuffs of partisan servitude while reducing this array of employees and subordinates to the lock-step of partisan bondage. The same process is going on in the kindred departments of municipal administration, as the Department of Public Works, the Fire Department, and the Board of Education. Pickings and stealings, the building-up of snug fortunes, the judicious nursing of thrifty opportunities, are insignificant elements, if they really lie in the subject. The crowning injustice, the superlative cruelty, lies in the fact that this gravest trust from the people is become at once the toy and makeshift of professional politicians.

When the Board of Commissioners of Charities and Correction shall come to be made up of philanthropists, men versed in sociology, who accept a duty toward the people as the highest and most inviolable of trusts, instead of men who regard public office as personal property ; men who live above all entanglements of political chicanery —then there will be found ways for checking and lessening this current of social waste, even if it may never be absolutely arrested, and moral disinfectants, detergent and tonic energies, be brought to bear directly and hopefully upon these imperilled thousands.





